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THE MONIST.

THREE ASPECTS OF MONISM.

IN the manuscript draft* of the Preface of my forthcoming work in the *Contemporary Science Series* entitled "An Introduction to Comparative Psychology" I have written as follows:

"In a treatise on human psychology it may be possible and advisable to proceed on purely empirical lines and to keep in the background the philosophy of the subject. But in a consideration of comparative psychology such a procedure seems to be neither possible nor advisable. It will conduce to clearness and prevent misconception, therefore, if I state at once that the interpretation of nature which I accept is a monistic interpretation. Now what do I mean by a monistic interpretation? What form of monism is it that I accept?

"First of all I accept a monistic theory of knowledge. The dualist starts with the conception of a subject introduced into the midst of a separately and independently existent objective world. For him the problem of knowledge is how these independent existences; subject and object, can be brought into relation. In the monistic theory of knowledge it is maintained that to start with the conception of subject and object as independent existences is false method, and that the assumed independence and separateness is no-

* This is only a first draft and will undergo modification, amplification, and revision. I quote it here as it stands in my manuscript. I propose to incorporate some of the matter in the latter part of this article.

wise axiomatic. Starting then from the common ground of *naïve* experience it contends that, prior to philosophising, there is neither subject nor object but just a bit of common practical experience. When a child sees a sweet or when a dog sees a cat, there is a piece of *naïve* and eminently real experience upon which more or less energetic action may follow. It is only when we seek to *explain* the experience that we polarise it in our thought into subject and object. But what logical right have we to say that the subject and object which we thus distinguish in thought are separate in existence? No doubt it is a not uncommon and a not unnatural fallacy to endow with independent existence the distinguishable products of our abstract and analytic thought. The distinguishable redness and scent of a rose may thus come to be regarded as not only distinguishable in thought but also separable in existence. But until it shall be shown that 'distinguishable in thought' and 'separable in existence' are interchangeable expressions, or that whatever is distinguishable is also separable, the conclusion is obviously fallacious. And it is this fallacy which the monist regards as the fundamental error of the dualistic theory of knowledge. While dualism, then, starts with what I deem the illegitimate assumption of the independence of subject and object, the monist, starting from the common ground of experience, looks upon subject and object as distinguishable aspects of that which in experience is one and indivisible. It need only be added that this is a theory of knowledge and of the experience of which knowledge is the outcome. Of that which is not known and not experienced it neither asserts nor denies anything. But accepting as it does the reality of experience it does assert that the aspect which we polarise as objective is just as real, and real in the same sense, as the aspect we polarise as subjective. The reality of object and subject is strictly co-ordinate. And those who hold this view regard as little better than nonsense the assertion that whereas the reality of the subject is unquestionable the reality of the object is a matter that is open to discussion.

"Secondly, I accept a monistic interpretation of nature and of man as a product of natural development. The essence of this view is that man as an organism is one and indivisible (though variously

mailable), no matter how many aspects he may present objectively and subjectively. That the inorganic and organic world have reached their present condition through process of evolution is now widely accepted. But the dualist contends that mind is a separable existence, *sui generis*, and forming no part of the natural world into which it is temporarily introduced. Here the monist joins issue and contends that alike in its biological and its psychological aspect the organism is the product of evolution; that mind is not extra-natural nor supra-natural but one of the aspects of natural existence.

“Thirdly, I accept and have attempted to develop a form of analytic monism. Assuming a concomitance between the nervous changes in some part of the brain and the psychical states experienced by the individual whose brain it is, and assuming further that the nervous changes are transformations of energy, it is suggested that what is under its objective aspect a complex series of transformations of energy in the nervous tissue is under its subjective aspect a complex series of psychical states. It is also suggested that something allied to consciousness, that is to say of the same aspect in nature (let us call it *infra-consciousness*), may be similarly associated with all manifestations of energy. One of my critics, Dr. A. R. Wallace, has objected that this suggestion is only an awkward restatement of that which Schopenhauer formulated with much greater clearness. I venture to think that this criticism shows a misapprehension of my view or of that of Schopenhauer. The essence of Schopenhauer’s conception, as I understand it, is that the underlying activity in the objective world, namely, that force of which energy is a manifestation, though not the only manifestation, is but the objective aspect of that which is the underlying activity in subjective experience, namely, will. This is a monistic conception which I accept; but my modification of Clifford’s mind-stuff hypothesis, though an allied conception, is not the same as that of Schopenhauer.

“Now analytic monism by itself is insufficient and partial. It is open to the criticism that while professedly monistic it postulates a dual aspect and is therefore merely dualism in disguise. But this criticism falls to the ground when this analytic monism is taken in

association with the monistic theory of knowledge and the monistic interpretation of nature and of man. My monism must be judged as a whole or not at all. Hence I have taken this opportunity of presenting a brief outline of the form of monism which I accept."

On reading the exceptionally interesting number of *The Monist* for January, it occurred to me that it might be of interest to those who have read these articles to read also what I had written and have above quoted; and that I might be allowed here to add somewhat to what I have above so briefly and baldly set forth concerning the three aspects of monism.

THE MONISTIC THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE.

I believe that as a *theory of knowledge* my own view is not very different from that of Dr. Lewins and Mr. McCrie, but both these writers appear to me to assume that what is adequate as a theory of knowledge suffices as an interpretation of nature. Even as a theory of knowledge these are expressions which appear to be awkward or misleading. Dr. Lewins speaks of "exploding 'thing' altogether" and "substituting our own thoughts for objects of all kinds." He says:

"It is true, or it may be granted, that there is an objective or distal aspect of subjective thought. But that fact, or admission, in no degree invalidates the position that the only objects cognisable are those incorporated with, and by, the subject self, from which all 'things' proceed."

Now if, as I contend, subject and object are of co-ordinate reality, through the polarising action of our thought, I see no reason why "thing" any more than "think" should be exploded; nor do I see why our own thoughts should be substituted for objects of all kinds rather than objects of all kinds be substituted for our thoughts. If there is an objective or distal aspect of subjective thought, this aspect has a reality strictly co-ordinate with the proximal or subjective aspect of things. I profess that I am unable to see why we should speak of a self from which all things proceed rather than of things from which the self proceeds. And when that clear thinker and elegant writer, Miss Constance Naden, says that "every man is the maker of his own cosmos," she would have done well to add

four monosyllables and to write : Every man is the maker of and is made by his own cosmos. Mr. McCrie uses similar expressions. He says :

"No appulse, or outside stimulus, is really thinkable, as external. It is part of the cosmos which, spider-like, I spin from my internal self. And, when I image such externality, I but create it."

I am not sure that I quite understand what Mr. McCrie means by the first part of this passage. It appears to me that the outside stimulus *is* thinkable as external, and that Mr. McCrie must think it as external in the very act of trying to explain it away. To say that spider-like I spin the cosmos from my internal self is unadulterated idealism, just as Mr. Ward's doctrine, that mind is a property of the substance protoplasm, is unadulterated materialism. As a theory of knowledge I should prefer to say: The self and the cosmos are the co-ordinate products of our abstract and generalising thought on the common matter of experience as polarised into object and subject; or, more briefly, self and cosmos are the polarised aspects of experience as explained through reason.

I do not think, however, that there is at bottom much difference between Dr. Lewins or Mr. McCrie and myself on the monistic theory of knowledge, and Dr. Carus is, I feel sure, with me or—let me say more modestly—I with him. It would seem, however, from his article, that Mr. McCrie would make what is a theory of knowledge into an interpretation of nature. He starts with quotations from Professor Veitch which deal with "the subsistence of force that passes out of my perception," and then proceeds to give this further quotation :

"We distinguish ourselves from the object or percept. . . . Are we entitled on this ground to say that its whole reality is identical with its perceived reality? That it may not subsist apart from the time of our perception, either as it is, or in some form capable again of appearing to us as an object, even an object similar to what we now perceive?"

Professor Veitch, without professing to explain the mode of its existence—nay, further suggesting that we may here be face to face with the "insoluble mystery of being"—assumes that it may so sub-

sist. And Mr. McCrie, after some discussion, closes the section with these words :

"Here is a subject-object relation admittedly fortuitous and temporary."

Further on he gives us what he terms the "Open sesame !" of auto-monism.

"Atom, vibration, undulation, mutual attraction, all these *are not*, save as I shape them, and, in the last recess of philosophy, as in the extreme limit of physics, *I am, and there is none else*. 'The cosmic systole and diastole are one with the pulsing throb of my own egoity.'"

Now, the criticism I would make on all this is that what is quite satisfactory as a theory of knowledge is, if I understand Mr. McCrie aright, assumed to be also a satisfactory interpretation of nature. I presume we may take the italicised words "are not" as meaning "are non-existent." I ask Mr. McCrie on what logical grounds he makes this somewhat bold assertion. The theory of knowledge deals with experience, polarises it into subject and object, and so forth. Well and good. But what of that which is, or may be, or may not be, prior to experience and posterior to experience? The theory of knowledge that is modest and knows its business replies, "I do not know. I deal with experience. I can tell you nothing concerning that which is not yet experience or no longer experience. That is a matter of the interpretation of nature." I contend that Mr. McCrie has no logical right to assert or deny anything concerning atom, vibration, and the rest "save as he shapes them" in his experience. He has no logical right to say, "*I am, and there is none else*." He should sound a more modest note and say : "I am, and what is outside my knowledge I do not know."

The gist of my criticism of Mr. McCrie and those whose views he represents is that though their theory of knowledge is substantially correct, it is by itself insufficient and cannot be regarded as an interpretation of nature or an explanation of that experience with the two aspects of which it deals.

THE MONISTIC INTERPRETATION OF NATURE.

There are some excellent folk who believe that philosophy is possible without assumptions. I am not among their number. Hy-

potheses, or assumptions, are as necessary in philosophy as they are in science.

Mr. McCrie appears to regard as necessarily dualistic the assumption that the world, or, to take a concrete example, a stone on a lonely mountain height, may, when no one is perceiving it, exist "either as it is or in some form capable again of appearing to us as object." The reason is obvious. For him knowledge is coextensive with existence. The stone under the given circumstances is not the objective aspect of a bit of experience; therefore, it is either non-existent or *his* monism falls to the ground; hence he proclaims it non-existent. I prefer the other alternative and contend that his monism is insufficient. But I deny that the assumption is necessarily dualistic in the sense that it is necessarily incompatible with a monistic interpretation of nature. For nature is wider than knowledge.

I assume that the stone on that lonely mountain-top exists "either as it is or in some form capable again of appearing to us as object," whether any one is there to perceive it or not. I cannot possibly prove this. I suppose I accept it for this reason; that of the two hypotheses, (*a*) that it continues to exist in some form or other, whether an object of experience or not, and (*b*) that it dodges in and out of existence according as it is perceived or not perceived, (*a*) satisfies me, while (*b*) satisfies Mr. McCrie. Anyhow, if I cannot prove (*a*), neither can Mr. McCrie prove (*b*). I assume, then, that the world which forms the objective aspect of knowledge continues somehow to exist quite independently of its being perceived. How it exists, I do not know, and (I make this confession with bated breath) after mumbling the problem a good deal in my philosophic teething days I have ceased to care.

That there is a nature to interpret is thus an hypothesis or assumption, the sole justification of which is that the hypothesis, though it can never be proved, accords more satisfactorily with the facts of experience than any other assumption. It does not conflict with the monistic theory of knowledge; it merely fills in the gaps of actual experience with "permanent possibilities" of experience. And now we have got our world, the question is how we are to in-

terpret it. Here I am quite content to accept Dr. Carus's definition of *this aspect* of monism.

"Monism is a unitary world-conception."

Here again I am sure that we ought not to be ashamed of stating frankly the hypothetical nature of our view. We assume that what we call nature is coextensive with knowable existence. We assume that far, very far, as we may be at present from anything like a complete or adequate explanation of nature, it is explicable, and that by one method, the method of scientific procedure. Herein lies the essence of our monism under this aspect. If in the wide region of the known and the knowable (we leave the unknowable for those whom it may concern) there be any modes of existence which not only are not explicable, but from their very nature can never be explicable as parts of one self-consistent whole, our monism falls to the ground. We contend that it is this to which the science, the philosophy, the poetry, aye and the religion, too, when purged of superstitious accretions, has been tending throughout the centuries of human progress.

A monistic interpretation of nature, so long as it holds true to the main principle of being throughout self-consistent, allows any amount of individual freedom in the treatment of details. It is characterised not by the possession of a common scientific or philosophic creed, but by a common aim. It appears to me, for example, that in the evolution which sweeps through nature the underlying activity is throughout characterised by the following traits: (1) it is selective; (2) it is synthetic; (3) it tends from chaos to cosmos. And these traits seem to me characteristic alike of inorganic, organic, and mental evolution. Now I dare say there are not half a dozen independent monists who will agree with me in singling out these three traits for especial prominence. But what does that matter? My aim is monistic as is also theirs. And there is plenty of room for many differences and even divergencies of opinion among those who are in search of a self-consistent theory of thought and things.

ANALYTIC MONISM.

I have already indicated how, in my opinion, a monistic theory of knowledge must be supplemented by a monistic interpretation of nature. Either without the other is incomplete.

I now turn to what may be termed analytic monism. This consists in an analysis of the object of knowledge, or, in other words, of nature, as known and knowable. Now here it is essential quite clearly to grasp the fact that all that we know must, in the act of becoming known, be an object of knowledge. The object of knowledge is not merely the object of sense, but includes also the object of thought. All that we know of the subject, all that we attribute to the self, must, in becoming known, be the object of thought. It is only in reflexion or introspection, which is also retrospection, that this is possible. You cannot analyse any bit of experience at the moment when it is being experienced, you can only look back upon it in a subsequent moment of reflexion. In that subsequent moment it may be polarised into object and subject, and either the objective aspect or the subjective aspect may then be the object of thought. In this way the subjective aspect of experience in moment (*n*) may be object of thought-experience in any subsequent moment (*q*). But never can the subject of experience in any moment be the object of knowledge in the same moment. Hence it follows that without reflexion there can be no knowledge of the subjective aspect of experience. And hence it follows also that our knowledge is always dealing with the self of a moment ago. It is an assumption which can never be proved, but one on the validity of which we all place complete reliance, that the subject is continuous and that the subject of the present moment is practically identical with the subject of a moment ago of which we have knowledge through reflective thought.

Let us take that natural object which we call a man, and let us assume that he is constituted in all essential respects as we are. We analyse him in thought; and we may carry our analysis but a short distance or as far as ever we can. Analyse him a little way

down and we reach the conception of body and mind. It is clear that the concepts of this analysis are closely connected in origin with the concepts reached by the analysis of experience, and that body and mind are analogous to object and subject. Now the fact to which analytic monism should, as it seems to me, stick close is, that body and mind are the products of analysis. What is practically given is the man ; and this man is one and indivisible, though he may be polarised in analysis into a bodily aspect and a conscious aspect. It may be said that this is an assumption. Granted. It is part of the fundamental assumption of the monistic interpretation of nature. According to that assumption or hypothesis the organism in all its aspects is a product of natural evolution. We proceed to study that product. We analyse these aspects. We find that a certain group of them hang together in a special way, and we call them bodily aspects; and we find that a quite different group of them hang together in their special way, and we call them mental aspects. There is no getting on without an hypothesis of some kind, and this is the one which the monist adopts. The dualist says that the organism in its bodily aspect is a product of evolution or of some other process of genesis, and that the mind is implanted therein by some extra-natural process. That is his assumption. The future must decide which assumption is the more reasonable.

According to the monistic assumption, then, the organism is one and indivisible, but is polarisable in analytic thought into a bodily and a mental or conscious aspect. Body and mind, like object and subject, are distinguishable, but not separable. And now we proceed to carry the analysis deeper ; we reach the brain or some part of it ; and here our analysis discloses as one aspect certain forms of nervous change or transformations of energy, and as the other aspect certain phases of consciousness. Note clearly that this is merely through carrying further the same process of analysis, and that, of the products of analysis, neither can claim priority or superior validity over the other. They are strictly co-ordinate : each is as real as the other. The true reality is the man with which the analysis starts : no valid product of the analysis of that man through the application of rational thought can be more real than another.

The question then arises : Given an organism in which analysis gives two aspects, complex energy and complex consciousness, from what have these been evolved by an evolution which is selective, synthetic, and cosmic or determinate? From the nature of the case the evolution of the bodily aspect is that of which alone we can have objective knowledge. We trace the evolution backwards and find, in our interpretation thereof, simpler and simpler organisms until the organic passes into the inorganic. We find the energy less and less complex as we look back through the vista of the past. And what about the other aspect? Does it not seem reasonable to suppose that, no matter what stage we select, analysis would still disclose the two aspects? That with simpler modes of nerve-energy there would go simpler modes of consciousness, and that with infra-neural modes of energy there would be infra-consciousness or that from which consciousness, as we know it, has arisen in process of evolution? This is admittedly speculative. But is it illogical?

Let us return, however, from this speculative excursion to emphasise again the fact that for monism the organism in practical experience is the starting-point ; that it is one and indivisible though it has different aspects which may be distinguished in analytic thought ; and that these aspects are strictly co-ordinate ; neither is before nor after the other.

Now, opposed to such a view are (1) the hypothesis of materialism according to which the body is the real substance, the mind being one of its properties, and (2) the hypothesis of what may be termed psychism, which is, in the words of Charles Kingsley, "that your soul makes your body, just as a snail makes its shell," that mind is the reality of which the body is merely the phenomenal aspect. I welcome Dr. Carus's definition of such theories :

"They are pseudo-monistic, and to distinguish them from true monism, we propose to call them *henisms*, or single-concept theories."

They are opposed to monism, as I interpret it, in that they depart from the cardinal principle of monism, which is that practical experience is the fountain-head of reality. They give to one product of the analysis of this experience a validity superior to that of another product of this analysis. No doubt such a procedure is ad-

missible. The henist has a perfect right to say this is my hypothesis or assumption. You must not reject it simply because it is a different assumption from that which you make yourself. Quite so. It is because I regard it as a different assumption that I welcome Dr. Carus's term henism. Henism must be judged on its merits.

I cannot attempt to discuss Mr. Lester F. Ward's henistic theory of mind. It appears to me to be a restatement of materialism. I have myself passed through a phase of materialistic thought ; but I have since then weighed it with due care and found it wanting.

In conclusion I must repeat that, in my judgment, the full strength of monism is not apparent until we view it in its three phases as a theory of knowledge, an interpretation of nature, and an hypothesis which correlates energy and consciousness. Monism must be judged as a whole or not at all. Its cardinal tenets are : that nature is one and indivisible and is explicable on one method, the method of reason ; that experience is one and indivisible, though we may distinguish its subjective and objective aspects ; that man is one and indivisible, though our analysis may disclose two strongly contrasted aspects, body and mind. It contends that man in both aspects, biological and psychological, is the product of an evolution that is one and continuous ; and, combining the results of its theory of knowledge with those of its analysis of man, it identifies the mind, as a product of evolution, with the subject, as given in experience.

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